

WEDNESDAY, MAY 29, 2002

Connolly convicted



John J. Connolly Jr. leaving federal court following the verdicts yesterday. His lawyer, Tracy Miner, is behind him at left.

By **Ralph Ranalli**
GLOBE STAFF

Pressure increases for FBI reforms

He may have been a dirty agent, the jury seemed to say yesterday, but it was the FBI who handed John J. Connolly Jr. a dirty job. Jurors explicitly punished Connolly for helping his friends in the Winter Hill gang — but almost completely for his actions after he retired from the FBI. The decision seemed to put the onus on the FBI itself and a culture that gave agents wide latitude in consorting with powerful underworld figures, for the crimes allegedly committed by Connolly when he was an agent, including tipping off mobsters about potential witnesses against them, legal specialists said. For some, the verdict adds fuel to the ongoing effort to reexamine and reform the nation's premier law enforcement agency and shifts the focus.

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By **Shelley Murphy**
GLOBE STAFF
and **Thanassis Cambanis**

But jury acquits ex-agent of most serious charges

John J. Connolly Jr. left the FBI a hero for turning Boston's most vicious gangsters into powerful informants against the Mafia. But yesterday the retired FBI special agent was convicted of being a criminal himself for protecting those same informants, James "Whitey" Bulger and Stephen "The Rifleman" Flemmi, by tipping them off to their indictment and trying to undermine the government's efforts to convict the pair. Yet even as jurors convicted Connolly, 61, of racketeering, obstruction of justice, and lying to an FBI agent, they found that prosecutors failed to prove the most serious charges against Connolly: that he leaked information that prompted the two gangsters to kill three men in the 1970s and 1980s. Jurors also found that prosecutors didn't prove that Connolly assisted Bulger and Flemmi when they forced a couple to sell their South Boston liquor store in 1984. The jury found that prosecutors proved that Connolly delivered a case of wine with \$1,000 tucked inside to FBI supervisor John Morris from Bulger and Flemmi in 1982 or 1983. But the jury rejected additional allegations that Connolly delivered two other bribes of \$5,000 and \$1,000 to Morris or that he participated when Morris alerted Bulger and Flemmi in 1988 that a Roxbury bookie's telephone was tapped. And the jury also concluded that prosecutors failed to prove that Connolly received a two-carat diamond ring from

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